

The Sensational **SPIDER-MAN**

BACK IN BLACK




-Crain-




ONCE, THERE WAS A BOY FROM THE BOROUGH OF QUEENS, IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK, WHOSE NAME WAS PETER.



AND THIS BOY WAS BLAMELESS AND UPRIGHT, WITH A GOOD HEART, WHO NEVER TURNED TOWARD EVIL.



DESPITE AN EARLY TRAGEDY HE DIDN'T REMEMBER, IT SEEMED AS IF THERE WERE A PROTECTIVE WALL AROUND HIM AND HIS HOUSE, HIS UNCLE AND HIS AUNT, ON EVERY SIDE.



EXCEPT WHEN PETER WAS AWAY FROM HOME, AT SCHOOL, BUT THEN...

HEY, PARKER, HUNGRY? EAT FLOOR, DWEEB!

...AS IT HAS BEEN IN HIGH SCHOOL, SO IT WILL EVER BE.

THE BOY BORE THESE DAILY HUMILIATIONS BRAVELY, NEVER LETTING THEM TAINT HIS SOUL.

AND FOR WHATEVER REASON...

...HIS BELIEF THAT THE WORLD WAS BASICALLY A GOOD PLACE NEVER WAVERED.

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, PETER? THAT FLASH IS *SUCH* A DOLT! HERE, LET ME HELP YOU UP.



I'M... I'M OKAY, LIZ.

ARE YOU SURE?

IF YOU WANT, WHEN WE GO ON OUR FIELD TRIP TO THE SCIENCE CENTER, YOU CAN SIT NEXT TO ME ON THE BUS.

GROWING UP, HE NEVER CRAVED GLORY OR GREATNESS. HE WANTED, SIMPLY, TO BE CONTENT.

AND HAD FAITH THAT HE WOULD BE.

UNTIL THE DAY, LIKE A SERPENT SLITHERING INTO A GARDEN, A CERTAIN SPIDER LOWERED ITSELF INTO HIS LIFE...

...AND CURSED THIS GOOD BOY NAMED PETER.

OW!

OR BLESSED HIM, THOUGH THAT
DEPENDS ON WHO'S TELLING THIS
STORY. AND, IN THE END, WHICH
SIDE--GOOD OR EVIL--WINS.



ONE THING WAS
CERTAIN, THOUGH...

FROM THAT FATEFUL DAY ON, IT WAS AS IF A DARK CLOUD SETTLED OVER PETER PARKER...



BE MY GUEST, CHUCKLES--

OUTTA MY WAY!



I DON'T GET IT. ALL YOU HAD TO DO WAS GRAB THAT CROOK--TRIP HIM--ANYTHING--!

THAT'S YOUR JOB, SPANKY, NOT MINE. FROM NOW ON, I'M ONLY LOOKING OUT FOR NUMERO UNO--ME!



AND FOLLOWED HIM HOME THAT TERRIBLE NIGHT...

AUNT MAY? WHAT'S GOING ON?

THERE WAS A BURGLAR. YOUR UNCLE BEN SURPRISED HIM AND...AND...

OH, PETER--!

AND SO:



THE POLICE TRAPPED THE CREEP WHO KILLED MY UNCLE BEN IN A WAREHOUSE--

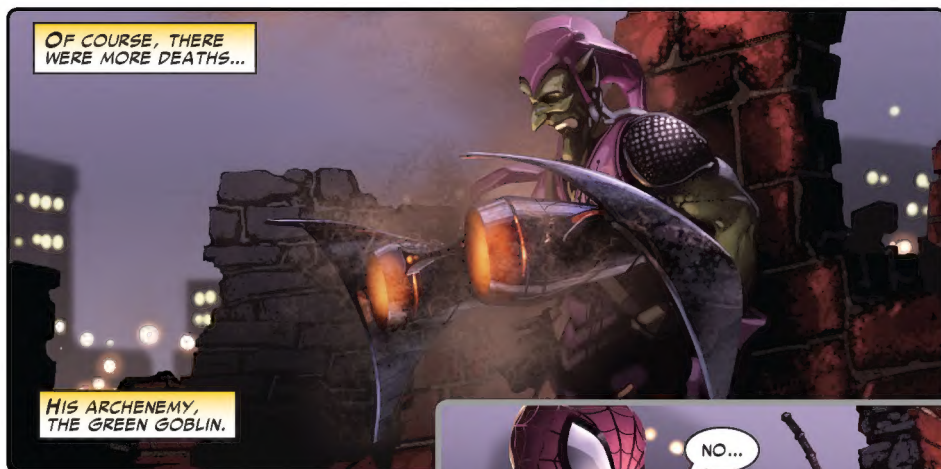
--IF THE MOON GOES DOWN, HE'LL BE ABLE TO SLIP AWAY AND ESCAPE THEM!

BUT HE'LL NEVER ESCAPE--



--SPIDER-MAN!!





...TO HIS AUNT MAY, WHO LIES IN A HOSPITAL BED, BARELY HANGING ON.

PETER...?

HUH?

YOU WERE TALKING TO YOURSELF, JUST NOW.

YOU WERE REPEATING..."NO," IT SOUNDED LIKE.

I WAS?

YEAH, I GUESS I WAS...

PETER, ARE YOU--

--YOU OKAY, TIGER? I MEAN, ALL THINGS CONSIDERED?

ALL THINGS CONSIDERED?

...

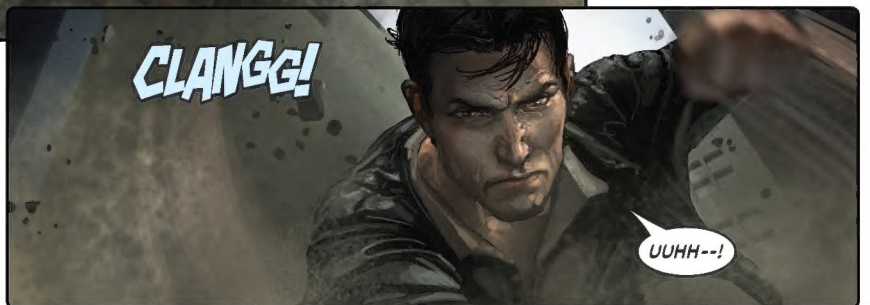
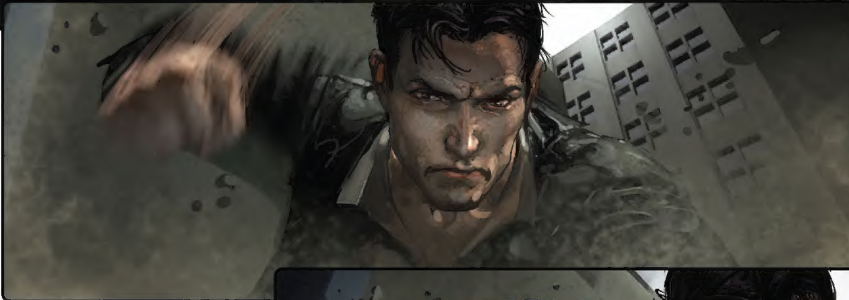
NO, MARY JANE, I DON'T THINK I AM...

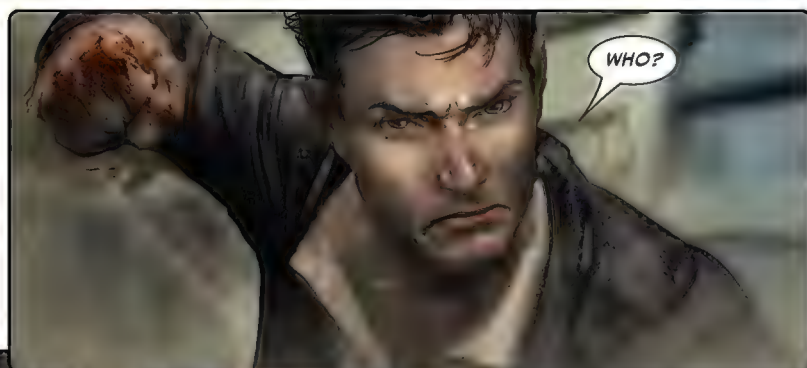
"...I DON'T THINK I'VE
BEEN OKAY FOR A
LONG TIME NOW..."

"PETER, WAIT--
WHERE ARE YOU
GOING?"

"TO BLOW OFF
SOME STEAM, MJ. TO
HURT SOMETHING."









WHERE--

SHUH--

--WHERE
DID YOU COME
FROM?



I WAS WALKING
BY, I HEARD YOU
PUMMELING THAT PIECE
OF CITY PROPERTY, I
THOUGHT: "MAYBE I
CAN HELP..."



WELL...I'D
ADVISE YOU TO BACK
OFF, MAN. I'M SO NOT
IN THE MOOD, YOU
HAVE NO IDEA.

ACTUALLY,
I BET I HAVE A
PRETTY GOOD
IDEA...

WHY DON'T
I BUY YOU A
BURGER AND
WE CAN TALK
ABOUT IT?



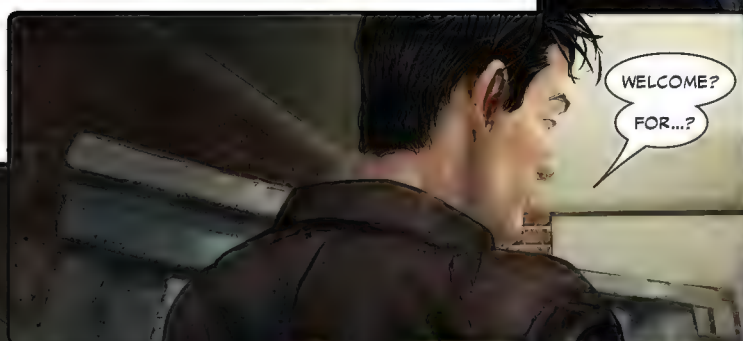
LOOK. IF THIS
IS SOME KIND OF
SCAM--


NO SCAM. YOU
JUST LOOK LIKE
YOU COULD USE
A MEAL...



...PETER.







YOU...YOU
SNUCK UP ON ME
AND MY SPIDER-SENSE
DIDN'T GO OFF...

WHO ARE
YOU?



C'MON,
PETER.

YOU
KNOW WHO
I AM.



YE...YES.



ALL
RIGHTY,
THEN.

LUNCH?
SOME FOOD?
MY TREAT?



"YOU'RE NOT EATING YOUR BURGER--"

"I KNOW."

"OR YOUR FRIES--"

"NOT THEM, EITHER, NO."

"OR YOUR SHAKE--"

"I DON'T HAVE MUCH OF AN APPETITE."



YOU NEED TO EAT. KEEP YOUR STRENGTH UP.

I...



...IS THAT WHAT I NEED? TO EAT?



PETER...

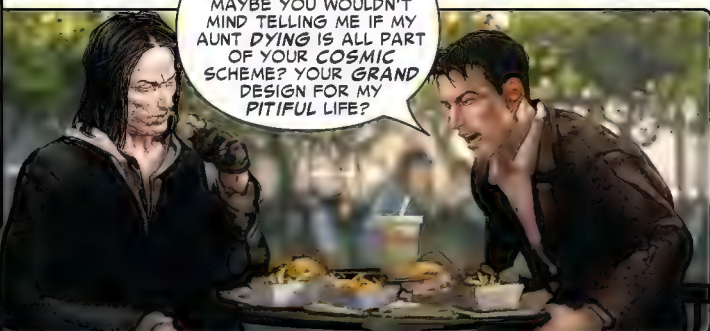
I'M SORRY--

I KNOW YOU'RE, AH, BUSY--

AND, AND OMNIPOTENT--

AND I'M JUST THIS FLECK, THIS NOTHING--

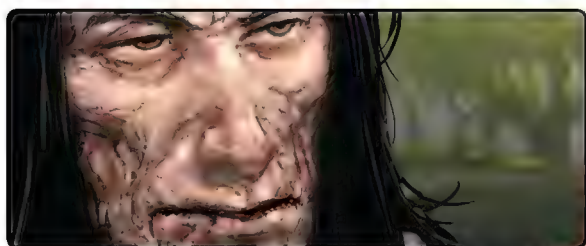
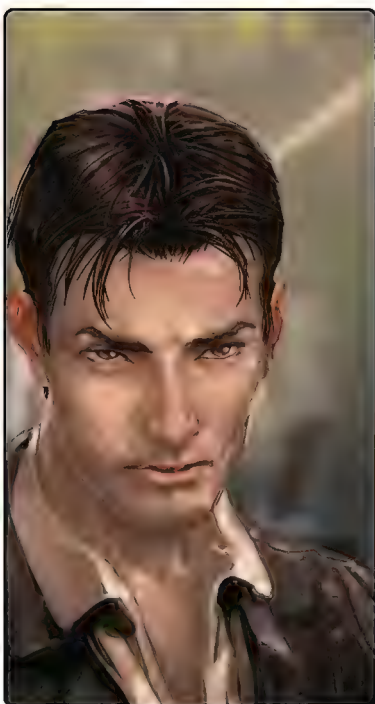
COME ON, NOW.

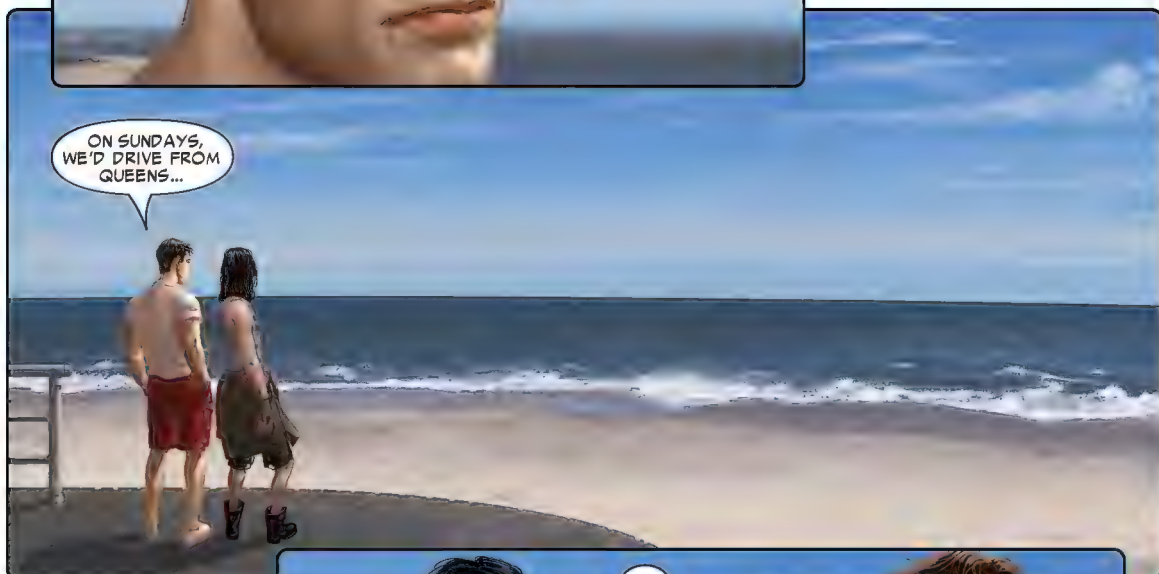
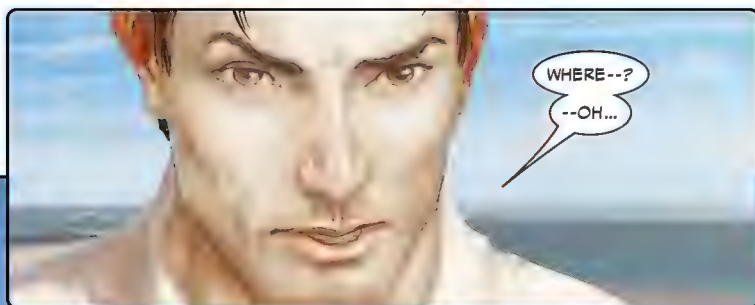


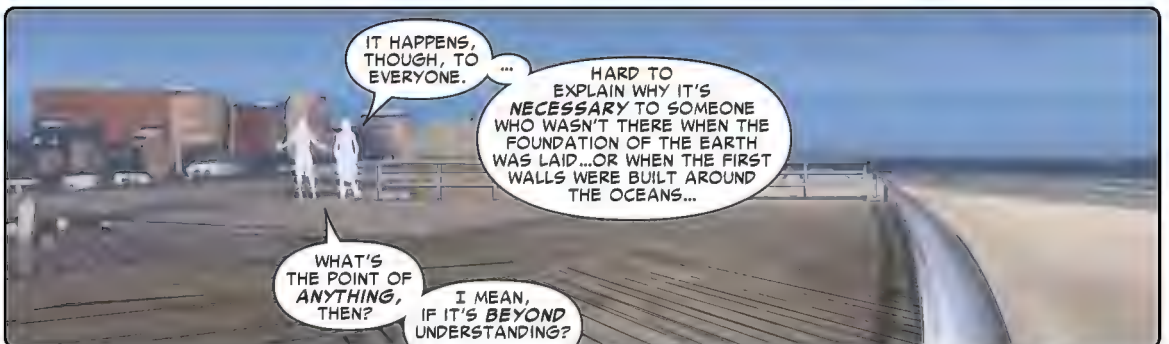
BUT SINCE WE'RE HERE, SINCE WE'RE BREAKING BREAD, MAYBE YOU WOULDN'T MIND TELLING ME IF MY AUNT DYING IS ALL PART OF YOUR COSMIC SCHEME? YOUR GRAND DESIGN FOR MY PITIFUL LIFE?



IF I TOLD YOU IT WERE...
...WHAT WOULD YOU DO, PETER?









WELL, FOR
STARTERS...
THEY ARE.

THEY'RE
SOME OF THE
POINT, PETER.

...



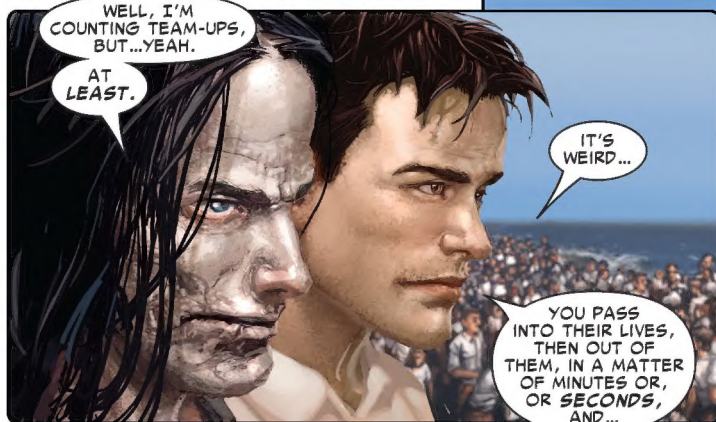
WHO... WHO ARE THEY?



THEY'RE AN ITSY-BITSY, TEENY-WEENY SAMPLING OF ALL THE THOUSANDS UPON THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE YOU'VE SAVED AS SPIDER-MAN OVER THE YEARS.

PARENTS, CHILDREN, GRAND-PARENTS, ENTIRE FAMILIES...

THOUSANDS UPON THOUSANDS? REALLY?

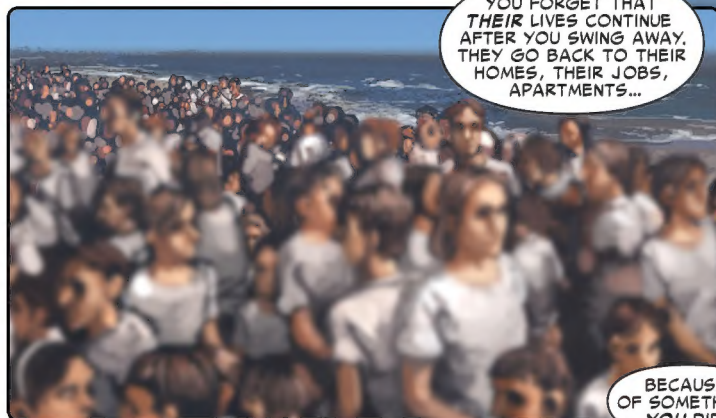


WELL, I'M COUNTING TEAM-UPS, BUT...YEAH.

AT LEAST.

IT'S WEIRD...

YOU PASS INTO THEIR LIVES, THEN OUT OF THEM, IN A MATTER OF MINUTES OR, OR SECONDS, AND...

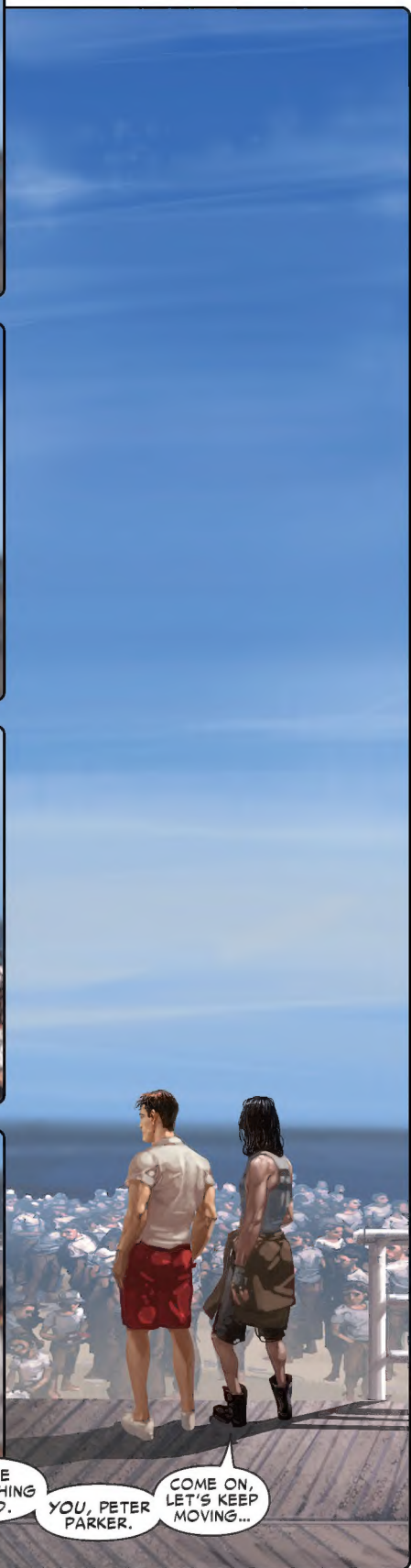


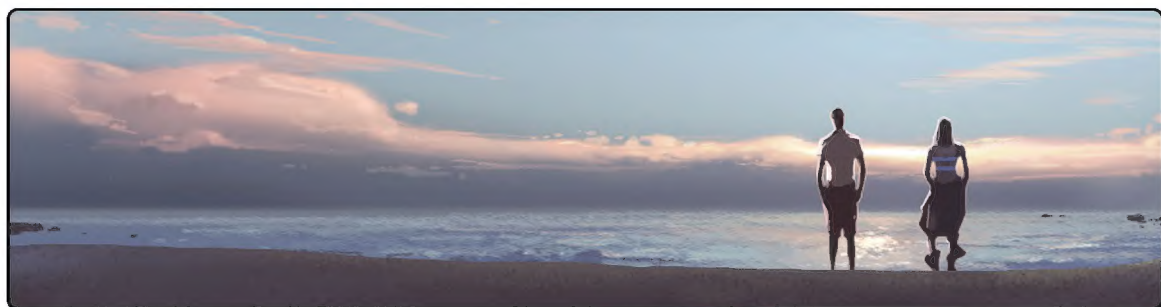
YOU FORGET THAT THEIR LIVES CONTINUE AFTER YOU SWING AWAY. THEY GO BACK TO THEIR HOMES, THEIR JOBS, APARTMENTS...

BECAUSE OF SOMETHING YOU DID.

YOU, PETER PARKER.

COME ON, LET'S KEEP MOVING...







HOW DOES
THIS STORY END?

FOR THE
MOMENT...

...LET'S SAY THAT IT DOESN'T
END HERE, IN AN ALLEY BEHIND
A HOSPITAL IN NEW YORK CITY.
LET'S SAY THAT IT ENDS MANY,
MANY YEARS FROM NOW.

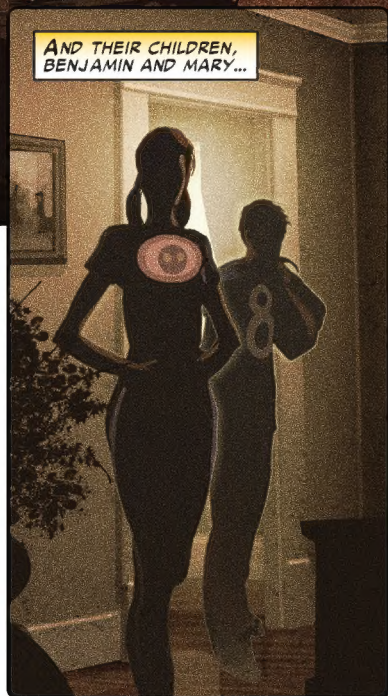


WITH THE MAN, PETER PARKER,
AND HIS FAMILY SURVIVING
WHATEVER HARDSHIPS COME
THEIR WAY.

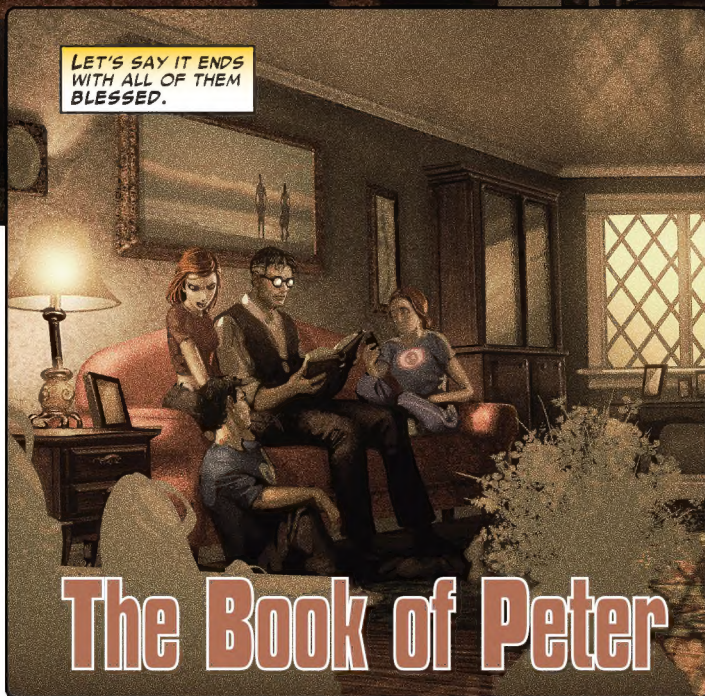
WITH PETER GROWING
OLD AND WHITE-HAIRED
ALONGSIDE THE WOMAN
HE LOVES...



AND THEIR CHILDREN,
BENJAMIN AND MARY...



LET'S SAY IT ENDS
WITH ALL OF THEM
BLESSED.



The Book of Peter